

May 14, 2013

Ms. Christy Montgomery, Grants Program Manager Youth, Planning, Boards Division of Workforce Services TDLWD 220 French Landing Drive, 4-B Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Ms. Montgomery:

I am requesting that our current Local Workforce Investment Area 7 Five-Year Workforce Investment Plan be extended through June 30, 2014. I am submitting the required stage I updated information following the Level II TNCPE criteria. All other required documents will be submitted no later than May 31, 2013.

Sincerely,

Pat Callahan, Employment & Training Director

Local Workforce Investment Area 7

## Local Workforce Investment Area 7

Strategic Plan Narrative

Stage I

2013

#### Stage I

#### Local Workforce Investment Area 7 2013 Plan

## I. Leadership

Consortium members, senior staff of each partner at the Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville, have created a performance reporting process to compare performance with goals for each and all partners. Each partner is asked to submit reports at consortium meetings and talk about the results. This allows for discussions of issues and possible solutions between partners. Process goals are being created by the consortium to address both goals and performance in delivering services to employers and job seekers and measure the overall effectiveness of the Career Center. We are required to have an overall financial audit each year that is reported to the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) Board of Directors, the Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB), the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD), and the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury. All workforce programs are monitored by TDLWD and Senior Services of America, Inc. All sub-contractors, training providers, and worksite users are monitored by internal program monitors. Career Center employees from each partner organization are encouraged to have more frequent informal meetings to improve daily processes and partner relations. This practice creates an attitude of ownership at the Career Center level without senior supervisors having to attend all meetings. We have created a monthly and annual process of selecting an employee of the month/year that allows the consortium to participate in the selection and recognition of all employee reward and recognition efforts. The overall employee population nominates a fellow employee each month. Each "Employee of the Month" is eligible for "Employee of the Year". Employees that receive either award have the opportunity of choosing a monetary incentive, a day off from work with pay, etc.

LWIA 7 is governed by the LWIB, which is overseen by the Chief Local Elected Officials (CLEOs). The State Workforce Board and TDLWD staff oversees planning and operational activities of each LWIA. We have regular quarterly meetings in each county with local Advisory Board's comprised of volunteer community leaders such as bankers, private industry leaders, religious leaders, public officials, etc. These volunteers assist in creating and maintaining awareness of programs and agency resources and increasing the capacity of some programs, and providing important feedback concerning community needs. Our reporting of services and performance results to these boards ensures accountability of management and program staff. In addition, workforce programs are monitored yearly by TDLWD staff to review expenditures, services, program management, participant files, etc.

## II. Strategic Planning

LWIA 7 conducts strategic planning each year through a process established by the State Workforce Board. In addition, the Employment and Training Division of UCHRA establishes internal goals and objectives for management and field staff. Our focus is on exceeding customer expectations, with an ongoing effort to improve quality and service through feedback from our customers. Of equal importance is strengthening our position with our revenue sources by providing superior service. Through the successful completion of our goals and objectives, we will strengthen our relationships with our stakeholders by incorporating their feedback into our ongoing process to build our Career Center system around the voice of our customers and revenue sources.

The Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA) 7 continues to address and give priority to the skill shortage occupations that emerge in our area as identified by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) Research and Statistics Department. We will focus on healthcare occupational training, including Registered Nurse and Licensed Practical Nurse, as well as other allied health occupations.

Overall, the effects of the down-turn in the economy and job losses have resulted in an increased work load for most partners of our Career Centers. Not only has the number of walk-in customers increased, but the number of customer phone inquiries has also increased. Changes made to the Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefit registration policy have been a topic of inquiry of many LWIA 7 customers. Customers are, in some cases, experiencing delays in receiving UI checks. Unemployment Insurance benefit customers have also voiced complaints that they are unable to speak with anyone or simply can not get a response, in some cases, for days when placing calls to the call center. Issues such as this have produced more phone calls to our Career Centers, or more walk in traffic. Most claimants do not understand that the Call Centers are now responsible for the bulk of UI transactions and questions. Also, some outlying county offices do not have TDLWD Job Service staff on site. This adds to the workload of those partners that do staff those affiliates, and, also may interfere with or delay scheduled meetings with customers. There has also been an increase in customers requesting commodities and monetary assistance with their electric and heating bills.

Our Career Center staff has made much progress in responding to the increased number of customer telephone inquiries and the number of walk in customers that have questions. The modification of the UI benefit registration process has enabled us to adjust in order to minimize the inconvenience to our customers during this time. This situation has made it necessary for our Career Centers to have an increased awareness of and also an increased engagement in teamwork with all partners. We are now scheduling appointments for applicants and doing a better job of meeting the employment and training needs of our customers.

The LWIA 7 training emphasis focus is on programs that offer individuals the opportunity to transition into long-term employment in demand occupations. Because of a projected percent change of 20.2 in the health care and social services industry, continued support of nursing training programs and other medical occupations will be a top priority, with a primary focus on registered nursing training. LWIA 7 has assisted over 291 participants in nursing programs during the current program year. Additionally, LWIA 7 will continue to provide recruitment support to the Tennessee Technological University (TTU) President's Academy for Emerging Technologies, which is designed to stimulate and build interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). After two years of WIA financial support, TTU is now funding this program, and LWIA 7 assists in identifying and recruiting students to attend.

Regional economic development partnerships are often necessary to recruit WIA participants for available job opportunities and to build adequate class populations for training programs. LWIA 7 has worked with LWIA's 4 and 6 to assist with filling training programs such as Nursing, Welding, Patient Care Technician, and the President's Academy for Emerging Technologies (STEM). Continued regional partnerships will assist local areas in providing quality programs and opportunities for our customers, job seekers and employers.

By using the "Source" and the "Job Outlook" to identify high growth, high skill job opportunities, we will target those industries and recruit individuals that show interest in those occupations. Currently, nursing, teaching, and food preparation and serving related occupations have been identified as three of the highest demand, high growth occupation clusters in our area. Routine meetings with front-line staff will be held to track services that are being provided and to determine if enrollments are on target with industry projections. On-the-job training and customized training will also be utilized to provide services to eligible employers and job seekers.

Our performance projections are in line with set goals in key workforce areas established by the TDLWD, which include entered employment, employment retention, average earnings, skill attainment, etc. The main focus is to meet or exceed these goals while providing the best possible customer service to both job seekers and employers.

#### III. Customer and Market Focus

Healthcare occupations such as Licensed Practical Nursing, Registered Nursing, Medical Laboratory Technicians, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Respiratory Therapy Technicians is projected to have the greatest number of job openings in LWIA 7 and are estimated to grow 20.2% for the timeframe of 2006 - 2016 according to "The Source". Estimated employment for the next two years based on healthcare industry surveys we conducted indicate a steady or growing need for these occupations in all medical facilities completing the survey. Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations is projected to have the second highest number of job openings in LWIA 7. This industry is expected to grow by 14.46% in the 2006 - 2016 timeframe according to "The Source".

Education, Training and Library Occupations is projected to have the third highest number of job openings in LWIA 7 and is expected to grow by 9.7% in LWIA 7 in the 2006 - 2016 timeframe according to "The Source". Elementary and secondary schools in Tennessee are expected to grow 17.3 % in the 2006 - 2016 timeframe according to "The Source" and is expected to add about 2,697 new jobs per year. Population increases in the last ten to fifteen years in the Upper Cumberland area has made it necessary to build new schools or add on to existing schools to accommodate new students that have moved to the area.

Employment and Training programs in LWIA 7 are designed so that employment and training services are readily accessible to special populations. In addition to WIA Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth programs, LWIA 7 is a sub-contractor for the Title V Senior Community Services employment programs for aging Americans. LWIA 7 has been designated as an Employment Network with the Social Security Administration for the Ticket to Work program. The Ticket to Work program is an employment program that is specifically designed for individuals who receive social security disability benefits and would rather be employed. This program assists these individuals by helping them find employment. LWIA 7 also provides information and assistance to employers regarding the Federal Bonding Program and Work Opportunity Tax Credit program. These programs encourage employers to hire ex-offenders. Since LWIA 7 continually focuses on informing employers of the benefits they receive by hiring members of America's aging population, individuals with disabilities, or previous offenders, these special groups have a greater chance of attaining employment.

LWIA 7 has experienced an increase in activity for veteran services through the TCCC. The Tennessee Department of Veteran's Affairs, Veterans' Benefit Representative (VBR) is now co-located at the

Cookeville Career Center. The VBR interviews and counsels veterans and their dependents concerning benefits such as pensions, compensation, education, hospitalization, insurance, loans, discharge review board, medical care, and veteran's preference. The VBR also prepares formal claims and compiles appropriate supporting documents and evidence in support of claims for presentation to the appropriate agency, and reviews denied claims and assists veterans and their dependents in preparing rebuttals to adverse benefits/decisions for presentation to the claims service for prosecution.

The TDLWD Veterans Outreach Specialist (VOS) interviews veterans with barriers to employment and provides case management services. The VOS conducts personal interviews with veterans visiting a career center to determine veterans' job readiness, work qualifications, and suitability for particular training programs or jobs. The VOS also establishes a network with community-based organizations and veterans organizations; and contacts employers to inform them of services available and to identify their employment needs. The VOS conducts follow-ups with employers to obtain feedback about employment services provided and gathers information about the services that can be provided to veterans through community-based organizations and veterans' organizations. The VOS meets with community-based organizations and veterans organizations, VFW, DAV, and American Legion, to solicit their support and exchange information about respective services provided. All veterans and non-veterans are invited to attend Employment Preparation Workshops that are conducted bi-weekly. These veterans are provided services using a number of resources such as Jobs4TN.gov, Operation Standdown, Veteran Vocational Rehabilitation, VA Healthcare and Mental Health Care Providers, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, County and State Veterans Service Officers, and WIA Case Managers.

The TDLWD Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) also refers veterans to other agencies such as the VFW, American Legion, and the UCHRA for other services. The LVER identifies and determines appropriate services and benefits for veterans and coordinates employer outreach to encourage employers and veterans to use the services of the local Career Center. The LVER works closely with the Business Services Specialist with job fairs and community activities. The LVER follows-up with employers, veterans, and supportive service agents to determine effectiveness of service provided to veterans, gathers information about local job and business needs by developing relationships with employers, and advocates for hiring veterans to employers through multiple communication avenues. The LVER conducts outreach within the community to locate veterans with disabilities in the absence of a Veteran Outreach Specialist. The LVER monitors and evaluates office procedures and interviewing activities to assure veterans are receiving priority of service.

UCHRA has a number of programs to help veterans and their families. The Upper Cumberland Area Rural Transit System (UCARTS) offers public transportation to Veterans Administration (VA) Centers, medical appointments, job interviews, to and from employment, etc. The County Mayors of Fentress, Overton and Pickett counties in LWIA 7 have purchased a 12 passenger van to transport veterans to and from the VA Hospitals. The VA pays for the vans' maintenance and fuel. UCHRA manages the licensing, provides training for the driver and operates the call center and dispatching for trips. Other services offered through UCHRA are: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program; the Weatherization Assistance Program; the Rent, Utilities, and Prescription Assistance Program; and the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (Commodities). The Child and Adult Food Program supplements the cost of meals to children or adults in licensed private day care homes, and the Child Care Certificate Program assists families with child care expenses. Information and referral services are

offered to assist families and individuals in accessing available services and resources in the LWIA 7 area.

Although job losses in LWIA 7 have slowed somewhat, there has still been a significant number of job losses for PY 2011. WIA case managers continue to have large numbers of participants that are still engaged in skill training or other program activities. For program year 2011, we served a total of 205 Dislocated Workers: 160 were dislocated only; 13 were dislocated and completed the CRC assessment, and 32 were Trade Adjustment Assistance clients. The CRC program continues to be popular with employers and participants seeking employment. Some companies that have job openings have requested that all applicants complete the CRC assessment as a condition to applying for a job with their company.

LWIA 7 and partners ensure that comprehensive services are available to eligible youth in the area that are in danger of dropping out of school, have significant barriers to employment, or are in need of occupational skills training. This is accomplished by working collaboratively with local school boards, technology centers, colleges, universities, and private industry businesses.

In partnership with the local Boards of Education, LWIA 7 has developed in-school youth programs designed to minimize high school dropouts in low-achieving, economically disadvantaged, at-risk youth. The Career Training program operates on the school and community levels while providing training that leads to secondary school completion, dropout prevention strategies, and leadership development opportunities. This program helps youth that graduate high school make successful transitions into post secondary education and employment. Out of school youth come in many varieties — high school dropouts, high school graduates who are basic skills deficient, and/or graduates who lack the skills they need to pursue employment or secondary education. LWIA 7's goal for out-of-school youth is to engage them in education and training programs which reconnect them with opportunities and give them hope for the future.

LWIA 7, Tennessee Technological University (TTU), Local Boards of Education, and LWIA 6 continue to work as partners to organize the President's Academy for Emerging Technologies at TTU. The academy is a five-day program for students in grades eight through eleven. It is designed to stimulate and build interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Program activities include hands on laboratory activities, engineering design, nanotechnology, chemistry, materials science, robotics, advanced manufacturing, fuel cell technology, technical communications, presentations by leading researchers, and tours at research facilities such as Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Vanderbilt Institute for Nanoscale Science and Engineering, Arnold Engineering and Development Center, and the University of Tennessee Space Institute in Tullahoma. The Academy is funded by the Tennessee Technological University President's Office. LWIA 7, LWIA 6, and Local Boards of Education participate in the recruitment and selection of applicants to attend the camp.

Our vision in LWIA 7 is to increase the number of on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities in our area with employers who offer earnings which allow workers to become self-sufficient. We hope to continue and expand our partnerships with area technology centers and other schools to assist other employers with customized training. Since multiple partners deal with the same customers, if one partner is unable to meet a customer's needs, other partners will work with that customer to try and meet their needs. This level of commitment to our customers from all partners helps ensure a level of loyalty to keep the

Career Center services in the minds of Career Center customers. We work closely with employers in the community to determine what services offered by the Career Center are needed. We also monitor feedback from customer satisfaction surveys conducted by the University of Memphis. Follow-up surveys are conducted by management staff to ensure satisfactory service was provided by the Career Center. We have Advisory Board meetings in each county that private industry leaders, county officials, religious leaders, etc. attend. These meetings are very instrumental in keeping us informed of employer needs.

## IV. Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

Data and other information sources that are utilized to measure, analyze and then improve our organizational performance were selected by consortium members of our Tennessee Career Center at Cookeville. The major metrics selected are: WIA Adult Entered Employment Rate; WIA Adult Retention Rate; WIA Adult Average Earnings; WIA Dislocated Worker Entered Employment Rate; WIA Dislocated Worker Retention Rate; WIA Dislocated Worker Average Earnings; Youth Entered Employment; Youth Attainment or Degree or Certification; Youth Literacy or Numeracy Gains; Wagner-Peyser Entered Employment Rate; Wagner-Peyser Employment Retention Rate; and Wagner-Peyser Average Earnings. These major metrics do represent key work processes for each partner. The secondary metrics selected are: the total number of participants that request services; the number of positive outcomes that result from these requests for service; and the number of negative outcomes that result from these requests for service approximately 320 exits for PY 2012. These exits will be tracked and will determine our performance outcomes.

These metrics are being tracked by the respective partners and submitted quarterly to the Career Center Consortium for members to analyze and evaluate this data on a quarterly basis. Results from past quarters will be used to measure results from the present quarters' data as well as benchmark data from Local Workforce Investment Areas that are similar to LWIA 7. Consortium members and Career Center partners will also revisit metrics to insure that they are aligned with short and long term goals. Consortium members will utilize studies and other written material to identify "best practices" from Workforce Investment Areas across the nation and will pass these results on to all Career Center employees.

To manage information, information technology, and organizational knowledge, LWIA 7 utilizes all sources of information available. All partners, with the exception of Vocational Rehabilitation, are able to access most client information on the State-operated electronic Case Management and Activity Tracking System (eCMATS) database. This process will help prevent duplication of services.

#### V. Workforce Focus

LWIA 7 senior staff recognizes the importance of career development for those who "work in the trenches" and how challenging their work of providing assistance to customers who are re-connecting with the workplace or are moving into employment for the first time really is. Our Career Center staff has learned, especially during times of peak workloads, that cooperation and teamwork will help complete the job tasks at hand much quicker and more efficient than without them. Our communication skills are at times tested, since our Career Centers are staffed by different partner organizations that each has their own set of guidelines and reporting structures. However, the different partners recognize this

and strive to focus more on effective communication. The end result has made it easier for our customers to receive the maximum benefits when seeking help at our Career Centers because each of our partners are knowledgeable of services offered by their fellow partners.

Our senior leaders continuously monitor and refine policies and procedures that maximize the ability of front-line staff to exceed goals of the Employment and Training Division and show individual initiative in doing so. Employees are encouraged to set individual goals, and senior leaders encourage employees to be empowered in serving our customers. A Policies and Procedures manual has been developed, and regular staff meetings are held to provide training in any new or modified State or Federal regulations or local workforce board policies. Questions are discussed concerning work environment situations that could be handled in different ways, and best practice solutions are given by senior leaders. Discussions such as these, offer diverse ideas from our employees and allow senior leaders to understand how our workforce is thinking about daily work tasks.

Opportunities are provided for staff to attend professional career development through specialized training programs such as Global Career Development Facilitator Training, Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA) conferences, and TDLWD and United States Department of Labor workshops. This specialized training will empower our employees to be innovative in their approach to serve our customers. The LWIA 7 Employment and Training Director believes strongly that each employee must have confidence in their ability to do their job, understand their value to our organization, be knowledgeable of the tools at their disposal, and participate in education and training opportunities as they become available. This mindset is crucial to the success of services offered to our customers.

LWIA 7 has one comprehensive Career Center located in Cookeville. All services, as mandated by federal and state regulations and local workforce board policies, are administered by this Career Center. The UCHRA maintains offices in all twelve (12) counties of LWIA 7, and WIA staff provides services in all of these counties. Three counties have affiliate Career Center offices where at least one other partner provides staff and services. This allows more services to be offered to our customers. If additional funds were made available, our recommendation would be to provide additional services and make no other changes in terms of facilities. In the event of a substantial decrease in funding, our actions would be to evaluate staff levels to determine if services could be maintained with less staff. The Career Center workforce environment is supported by a strong retirement system and a strong benefit package which includes health insurance, paid holidays, paid vacation days, paid sick leave days, and longevity bonus payments. Since the initial primary location of the Career Center in Cookeville, affiliate sites have been able to relocate in some areas so that we have clean, modern, state of the art facilities in each location.

#### VI. Process Management

TDLWD Business Services Specialists continuously solicit job orders and opportunities to provide services to employers throughout LWIA 7. Recruitment, assessment, and referrals are based on partner staff determining specific qualifications and requirements necessary for meeting employer needs. WIA Case Mangers perform detailed assessments to determine each individual's skills and abilities as well as their compatibility with various occupational clusters. Individuals who are lacking the required skills for existing job opportunities are provided information on available training opportunities including on-

the-job training with which their existing skill levels are compatible. Only those training opportunities identified by the "Source" or "Job Outlook" as being training for "growth" occupations are considered for financial sponsorship. Individuals who need remediation can use internet-based learning tools available at the TCCC or through partnering Adult Education programs. Although we strive to meet the employment needs of our local employers, we continuously try to refine and improve our efforts.

Rapid Response activities coordinated by TDLWD staff provide on-site information for employers and employees experiencing downsizing or plant closures. Dislocated Workers needs are identified through preliminary needs surveys. Needs surveys allow us to determine which Dislocated Workers are candidates for post-secondary training or remediation and which Dislocated Workers are in need of direct job placement. Those in need of post-secondary training are assessed to determine high skill, high demand occupations they are suitable for once they complete training. If the person possesses marketable skills, they are referred to existing job openings. Based on market research and employer demand, our Career Center system targets high skill, high demand training and jobs to promote long-term self-sufficiency for individuals.

Each Career Center partner follows written policies and procedures that create daily work processes for implementing and managing the workforce programs. Weekly team meetings, monthly meetings, and quarterly consortium meetings allow the continuous exchange of information and input from front-line staff, which creates continuous improvement. Feedback from employers also provides valuable information in identifying areas where improvement is needed.

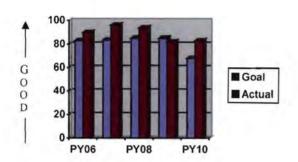
#### VII. Results

Major Performance Metrics for LWIA 7 partner programs are expressed in terms of "Goal vs. Actual." The major Performance Metrics for WIA programs are: Adult Entered Employment Rate, Adult Employment Retention, Adult Average Earnings, Dislocated Worker Entered Employment Rate, Dislocated Worker Employment Retention, Dislocated Worker Average Earnings, Youth Placement in Employment or Education, Attainment of Degree or Certification, and Literacy or Numeracy Gains. LWIA 7 performance using these metrics is reflected in figures 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3. Partner performance is reflected in figures 7.5, 7.6, and 7.7.

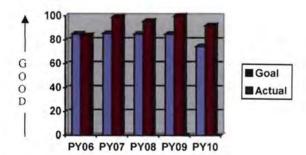
LWIA 7 has met or exceeded negotiated performance goals for Adult Entered Employment and Adult Retention Rate four of the past five years. The Adult Average Earnings goal was exceeded three of the past five years.

## WIA Adult Performance (Figure 7.1)

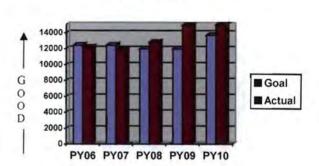
## Entered Employment Rate (Figure 7.1a)



Retention Rate (Figure 7.1b)



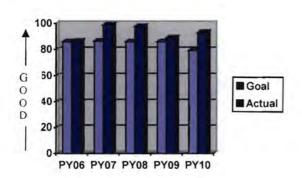
## Average Earnings (6 months) (Figure 7.1c)



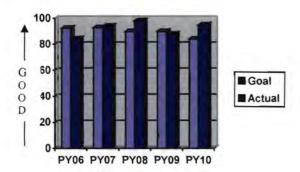
WIA Dislocated Worker Performance Metrics are shown in figures 7.2. The Dislocated Worker Entered Employment goal was exceeded for each of the past five years. The Retention Rate goal was exceeded for three of the past five years. The Dislocated Worker Average Earnings goal was not met for the past five years. This rate is difficult for entry level wage earners to attain in our geographic area due to this area having some of the lowest earnings of all thirteen areas of the state.

### WIA Dislocated Worker Performance (Figure 7.2)

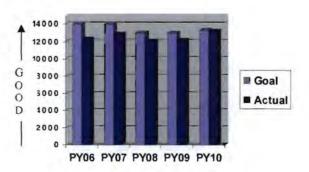
### Entered Employment Rate (Figure 7.2a)



Retention Rate (Figure 7.2b)



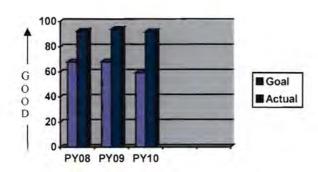
Average Earnings (6 Months) (Figure 7.2c)



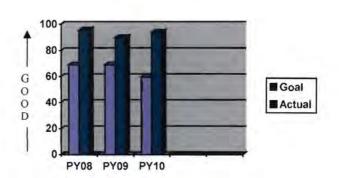
Starting in PY 2008, performance metrics for Younger and Older Youth were combined. Below are the performance metrics for PY 08 through PY 10. The Youth Placement in Employment or Education goal, the Youth Attainment of Degree or Certification goal, and the Youth Literacy or Numeracy goal have all been exceeded for each of the past three years.

## WIA Youth Performance (Figure 7.3)

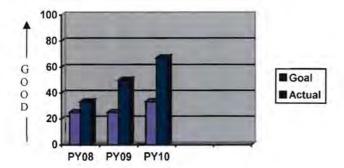
Placement in Employment or Education (Figure 7.3a)



Attainment of Degree or Certification (Figure 7.3b)

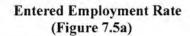


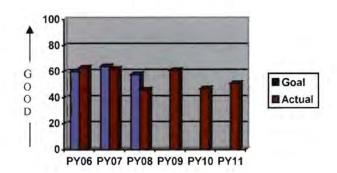
Literacy or Numeracy Gains (Figure 7.3c)



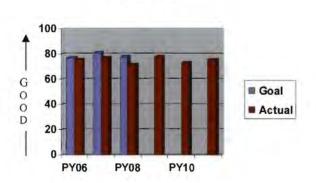
Wagner-Peyser met or exceeded the Entered Employment goal for two of three years and met or exceeded the Employment Retention goals for two of three years. Goals for Average Earnings were met one of the three years reported. (Updated performance goals information for Wagner-Peyser for PY 09, PY10, and PY11 has not been received as of 05/14/13).

## Wagner-Peyser Performance (Figure 7.5)

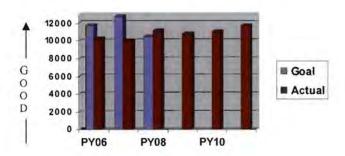




Employment Retention Rate (Figure 7.5b)

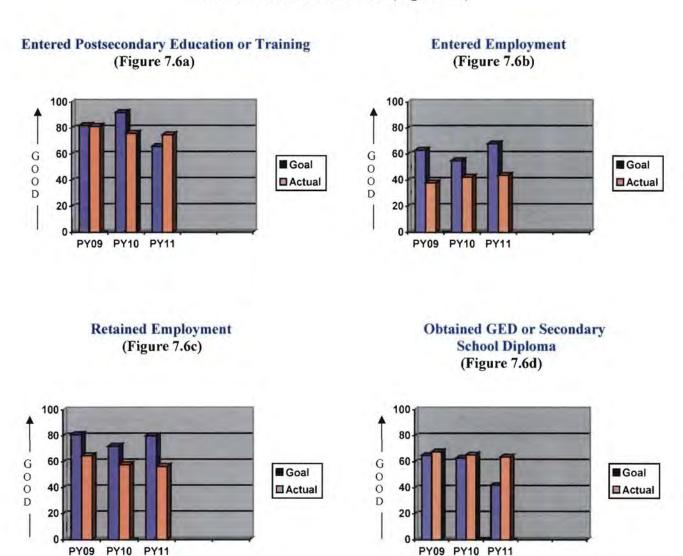


Average Earnings (Figure 7.5c)



The Adult Education program exceeded goals for Obtained GED or Secondary School Diploma for each of the past three years reported in Figure 7.6.

## Adult Education Performance (Figure 7.6)



Performance for Vocational Rehabilitation Services is shown in Figure 7.7. The goal was not met in PY 08, PY 09, and PY 10, was within one of being met in PY 07, and was met in PY 06. Performance for PY 08 was 96.2% of goal and ranks second in the state.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Figure 7.7)

# Entered Employment (Figure 7.7a)

